

WASHINGTON, DC-Today, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 1542, the "Tauzin-Dingell" broadband deployment legislation. This bill would allow Bell telephone companies to enter the long distance Internet market beyond their current local service areas without first opening their local markets to competition. The measure also allows the Bell companies to exclude competitors from using lines that have been upgraded to provide high speed Internet access and exempts these companies' broadband services from FCC or state regulation.

Congressman Earl Blumenauer voted against final passage of the bill and released the following statement on the debate:

"I am concerned that this deregulation could severely hurt consumers by limiting remedies for people with complaints about their telecommunications services, especially in situations where consumers have been provided poor service or unusually high rates. This bill will also increase rates for consumers because without the benefits of a truly competitive telecommunications sector, consumers and small businesses will have fewer choices and will pay higher prices for telecommunications services. Furthermore, this bill will not bring broadband to rural areas, as the proponents of this bill have argued because today's bill contains substantial loopholes and lacks real meaning for rural and underserved areas. The best way to promote lower prices and greater access is by ensuring a truly competitive market."

For more information on Congressman Blumenauer's work on telecommunications issues, please visit his web site at <http://www.house.gov/blumenauer/>.